

PUBLIC RELATIONS TIPS AND RESOURCES

In today's educational environment, it is critical to publicize the advantages students gain by participating in your program. All too often, when one mentions "publicity," we immediately think of print or broadcast media. It is important to realize that "public relations" means accurate, consistent and timely communications that convey the right message to the right audience. So, public relations may include school announcements, brochures, displays as well as newsletters, news articles, and broadcast bites. Simply put, "public relations" is a process, not an event.

To create a public relations plan, consider these three steps:

I. Think through your audiences

An audience is any individual or group who has any interest or stake in the activities of your program. This can reach far beyond the walls of your classroom and school. It's likely that your audiences include the local media, your neighbors and surrounding community, and current and former students and their families. Can you think of others who may have an interest or stake in your program?

II. Develop a public relations plan

This includes identifying your goals and objectives. What do you want to accomplish? Also, this is the time to decide how you want to be perceived by your audience. Finally, what are the most important facts that you want to communicate about your program? From these three simple questions, you can develop a strategy – how you will accomplish your objectives – and your tactics – the tools you will use to carry out your goals.

III. Develop a relationship with and use the local media

Especially at local and regional levels, the media are always on the lookout for a new story, a different angle, a fresh approach. Therefore, they are potentially interested in you and what your program is all about. These media outlets, charged with covering their communities, do not have the vast resources of celebrities, well-known experts and satellite feeds. They may very well need you and what you have to say about your field. Public relations includes community participation, bylined articles, public speaking, media commentary, relationships with local area reporters and development of good professional citizenship.

The following pages contain some simple guidelines and tips for preparing information to share with your local media as well as some information about a most valuable resource that you may already have.

Please add your own public relations plans and results in this section. We think you'll be surprised at the difference it makes!